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William F. Buckley Jr.: Adventures of the KGB

Not many Americans are aware that at about the time we are electing a new president, the Germans will be electing a new chancellor. Nor aware that the contest in Germany is, in European terms, as important as our own. Not because the incumbent Helmut Schmidt is a quisling, but because his party is dangerously divided, the leftward most wing of it determined to come to terms with Russia, which inevitably means coming to terms on Russian terms.

The leading opponent of Helmut Schmidt, the leader of the Christian Democratic Union, is a big man, in the tradition of Konrad Adenauer, Alcide de Gasperi and Paul Henri Spaak. He is as adamantly anti-Communist as one would expect of a German who has seen 25 years of misery imposed on one-half of his country. He is a resolute supporter of the free market sector in the tradition of Adenauer and Ludwig Erhard. He is a loyal Atlanticist, who believes that ties to the United States and joint action with the United States are indispensable to the security of Europe. Under the circumstances, it obviously follows that he is the principal target of Soviet derogation in Europe.

And this has gone on for many years, because for a period in the early '60s it looked as though Franz Josef Strauss, then serving as defense minister for Adenauer, might be tapped to succeed the old man. This the Soviet Union could not countenance and, accordingly, the boys hatched a plot. It turned out to be successful beyond their dreams. Within a matter of months, Strauss had quit office in disgrace.

And now a Czechoslovak defector, General Jan Senja, has given the details of how the KGB manipulated the future of Europe. It is as if we were to discover suddenly that a Soviet automatic drive mechanism had taken hold of Teddy's ear that night and brought out the whole tragedy. The *Der Spiegel* Affair has been Strauss' Chappaquiddick.

The Soviet plan, executed through Czech and German Communist agents, was to discredit Strauss. Accordingly, a mole in the Defense Department headed by Strauss leaked to the magazine *Der Spiegel* highly secret and tendentious details of unsuccessful maneuvers by the fledgling German army. The publication of the report proved a sensation, both intending to discredit the work of Strauss professionally, and in suggesting that he could not even maintain the security of his own office.

By today's post-Ellsberg standards, though not necessarily by the standards of 1962, Strauss overreacted. (I pause to note that General Senja informs us that huge attention is paid by the KGB to the personality of Western leaders, the better to cling to their weaknesses. Senja was present when Khrushchev in Vienna explained to his entourage that he needed to stroke de Gaulle's nationalism "like a violin.")

Strauss raided the offices of *Der Spiegel* and issued a warrant for the arrest of its

editor. This was denounced as high-handed by some Germans, many of whom were egged on by the echo chambers of the Communist apparatus in Europe; and the FDP, a small party in coalition with Adenauer's, demanded — and achieved — Strauss' resignation.

Since that time, enemies of Strauss returned and returned to the theme: that he was autocratic, insensitive to human rights and press liberty. At every juncture they exaggerated what he actually did, which is not only in strict conformity with the law, but rigorously, with one cloudy exception, attentive to specified procedure. Eleven times Strauss sued authors of inflated versions of his conduct: 11 times he won in court.

With the revelations of General Senja one wonders whether the critics of Strauss will feel abashed by the dismaying ease with which they were manipulated. The penetration of Communist agents into the German government goes beyond anything James Bond or Graham Greene would dare plausibly to suggest. Willy Brandt had to resign because his closest adviser proved to be a Communist. There have been scandals in most governments in Europe in the past few years, most recently in Great Britain.

It is extraordinary how the stubborn innocence of the United States prevents us from supposing that we too are targets for Soviet penetration at high circles. The dogma in America is: Because Joe McCarthy exaggerated, it follows that there is no Soviet penetration. Those interested in pursuing intelligent thought on the matter should read *Legend: The Secret World of Lee Harvey Oswald* by Edward Jay Epstein. Meanwhile, the vindication